

N^o 9

A V

S E R M O N

Preach'd in L A M B E T H - C H A P E L,
November the 13th. 1709.

A T T H E
C O N S E C R A T I O N
O F T H E

Right Reverend Father in God
T H O M A S
Lord Bishop of *C H I C H E S T E R*.

By **W I L L I A M S T O N E S T R E E T**, A. M.
Rector of *St. Stephen's in Walbrook.*

*Publiſh'd by Order of his Grace the Arch-Bishop
and the other Bishops present.*

Ⓐ
L O N D O N :
Printed for **J O H N W Y A T**, at the *Rose*, in *St. Paul's*
Church-Yard. 1709.

SEERMON

Preach'd in LAMBETH-CHURCH

November the 13th 1709

AT THE

CONSECRATION

OF THE

Right Reverend Father in God

THOMAS

Lord Bishop of CHESTER

By WILLIAM STURGEON
Rector of St. Andrew's in Walbrook



Printed by J. Sturges at the Sign of the Anchor in St. Dunstons Church-yard

to which Words may be considered as expressing or
LUKE Chap. X. former Part of Ver. 16.

*He that heareth you, heareth me ; and
 he that despiseth you, despiseth me.*

WE find these Words among some other Instructions, which our Lord gave to Seventy of his Disciples, whom he sent to several Cities of *Judea*, whither he himself design'd afterwards to come ; in the mean time, appointing them to prepare the Minds of the Inhabitants for the Reception of himself, by Preaching the Kingdom of GOD, and performing several miraculous Works, in Confirmation of the Authority by which they acted. Which Manifestation of a Divine Power accompanying their Ministry, our Lord thought so sufficient for the Conviction of these *Jews*, that he tells us, Their rejecting these his Ministers would make 'em highly Criminal in the Sight of GOD, even to such a Degree, that it would be more tolerable in that day, the Day of Judgment, for *Sodom*, than for that City, which should disregard and reject their Mission. And to give a more particular Account of their Sin in so doing, as, withal, to animate these his Disciples to a faithful Discharge of their Message, among all the Oppositions or Contempt they might meet with from perverse and unreasonable Men, he tells 'em in the Words before us ; *He that heareth you, heareth me ; and he that despiseth, or rejecteth, you (ὁ ἀθετῶν ὑμᾶς) despiseth, or rejecteth, me.*

Ver. 12.

Which

Which Words may be consider'd, as expressing, or at least, reasonably implying these **Three Particulars**.

First, As asserting the Authority of the Christian Ministry to be deriv'd from Christ himself; and this not only with respect to these **Seventy Disciples**, to whom these Words were more immediately directed; but to others also, in succeeding Ages, who should be employ'd in the same Office of Preaching the Gospel, as they were.

Secondly, As intimating to us one of the most usual Causes of the ill Usage which the Ministers of Christ may sometimes meet with from Men: As those who bear Christ, and take him for their Saviour and Lord, will pay a due Regard to his Ministers; so it may well be expected, that the same Persons, who reject, or at least, disregard Christ, will reject or despise those, who act in his Name, and by his Authority.

Thirdly, As expressing the near Concern which our Blessed Lord takes in the Usage, which His Ministers receive from the World. Whatsoever is done to them, he looks upon as done to himself: *He that beareth you, beareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.* And I shall from these Heads, as they come under our Consideration, make some Inferences, which they easily suggest to us.

I. First then, These Words cannot but imply, that the **Seventy Disciples** in the Mission here spoken of, acted in the Name of Christ, and by an Authority deriv'd to 'em from him. For the Good or Ill Usage they

they might find in the Cities of *Judea* cannot be sup-
 posed to imply Obedience to, or Contempt of, our Lord,
 any otherwise than as *they* represented *him*, and acted
 by *his* Commission. And from hence we may observe,
 That a Separation of some Persons from the Body of
 Believers, to be peculiarly employ'd in the Service of
 the Christian Church, and the investing 'em with some
 Powers which are not communicated to *all* Christians,
 is founded upon the Authority and Example of our
 Lord himself. We find by several Passages in the
 Gospels, that the Number of those among the *Jews*,
 who, even while our Lord was upon Earth, believed
 him either to be the *Messiah*, or, at least a *Prophet* and
Teacher sent from God, was very considerable. In se-
 veral Places we are told, that many believed on him,
 and that *he*, i. e. as St. *John* himself explains it, *his*
Disciples in his Name, Baptized more Disciples than ^{John 4. 1,}
John the Baptist. And it seems the Number of 'em
 was so great, that the *Pharisees* complain'd that *they*
prevailed nothing by their Opposition to his Doctrine, ^{John 12.}
 and that *the world was gone after him*; insomuch, ^{19.}
 that when the Governing Part of the *Jewish* Nation
 had determin'd to put him to Death, we find, they
 were forced to seize him by Night, and in the Place
 of his private Retirements, discover'd to 'em by *Judas*;
 because *they feared the people*, or, as St. *Mark* expresses ^{Luk. 22. 2.}
 it, *lest there should have been an uproar of the people*. ^{Mark 14.}
 And though, probably, far the greatest part of his ^{2.}
 Followers might desert him, and no longer believe him
 to be the *Messiah*, when they saw him deliver'd up to
 the *Roman* Power, and put to an ignominious Death;
 which, so far weakned the Faith of two of 'em (one ^{Luk. 24.}
 of which is thought by many to have been St. *Peter*) ^{21.}
 that

that upon this Occasion we are told, they spoke very doubtfully of him; yet even then there was still left such a Number that believ'd on him, that very soon after his Resurrection, he is said to have appear'd to ^{1 Cor. 15.} *above five hundred Brethren at once in Galilee.* But however numerous his Disciples might ever have been, we no where find that he sent *any* of 'em to preach the Gospel, or enabled *any* of 'em to perform miraculous Works: (which Power was *then* necessary for the effectual Conviction of an unbelieving World) but his Apostles only, and these Seventy Disciples.

Since therefore our Lord's Appointment of such particular Men, out of the Body of Believers, for the Performance of such Offices, as were necessary for the Propagation and Edification of the Christian Church, did confer upon these Persons a *peculiar* Authority, which was *not* communicated to *all* Christians; this was an Instruction to after Ages, to take the same Method which he did: For the Reasons for so doing are perfectly the same. And that our Saviour *did* actually invest others with this Power of *sending Labourers into his Harvest*, thereby providing for the Continuance and further Propagation of his Church in all succeeding Generations, I shall have occasion to shew in another Article of this Discourse.

Now from hence surely it will follow, that such a Commission, whether immediately given *by*, or originally deriv'd *from* the Blessed Jesus, ought to procure for those to whom it is given, fair Usage and a kind Respect from all who *truly* believe in him; and the Officers of his Spiritual Kingdom may justly expect a due Regard to their Ministry and Persons, *proportionably* to the *different* Powers they have receiv'd from him.

I say, proportionably to the *different* Powers they have receiv'd from him; for it appears sufficiently from the Evangelical History, that our Lord himself did confer higher Degrees of Authority upon some of his Ministers, than he did upon others. The Authority of the Apostles was greater, and included other Powers than that of these Seventy Disciples: And the Distinction made between them by Christ, was generally thought by the Ancient Christian Writers, a sufficient Argument for that Disparity of Power, which, ever since the Apostolical Times has been universally own'd, till lately, in the Christian Church. And 'tis from hence too, that a Writer of our own Country, who can by no means be thought partial in favour of a Prelacy among the Ministers of Christ, yet in his Annotations on the First Verse of his Chapter, where our Lord is said to have appointed these Seventy Disciples to the Employment there mention'd, acknowledges, *That by this it appeareth that Christ settled a disparity in his Ministers.* It must be confess'd, that this Difference does not so much appear by that Mission of the Apostles into the Cities of *Judea*, of which we have an Account in the Tenth Chapter of *St. Matthew*, and which preceded this of the Seventy: For their Employment, and the Powers given 'em, seem to be much the same in both these Missions; and tho' there may be observ'd some Difference between 'em, yet it seems not very considerable. And indeed, while our Lord himself was upon Earth, and govern'd personally his own Church, which too was then confin'd within very narrow Limits, there seems to have been no Occasion for any other Powers to be conferr'd upon his Ministers, than those of Preaching the Gospel and Baptizing Converts.

Mr. Baxter.

B

But

But the Power, by which the Apostles were most remarkably distinguish'd from *these*, as well as his other Disciples, was confer'd on 'em by our Lord after his Resurrection; when being soon to leave this World, he provided for the *future* Necessities of his Church, and not only enlarg'd their Commission for *Teaching* the Christian Doctrine and *Baptizing*, by extending it to *all Nations* whatever, but invested 'em too with a Power of Ordaining others for these and other necessary Offices of the Christian Ministry, to *the end of the world*. To this Purpose he tells 'em, *John 20. 21. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.* Which Words, though not applicable to *such* Particulars of our Saviour's Mission, as were merely *personal*, and related immediately to his being *sent to be the Propitiation for our Sins*, by the Sacrifice of himself; yet being express'd in so comprehensive a manner, they do *require* to be understood as *fully*, as they *can*, and with Respect to all *those* Particulars of his own Mission, which *could* be communicated to his Apostles. And therefore since our Lord was sent into the World not only to *declare* and *apply* the Means of Salvation to Mankind himself, but withal to empower *others* so to do, as we actually find he *did*; it seems most reasonable, that *his* Mission of his *Apostles* should be understood in the *same* manner. And that they themselves *did* thus understand it, and were taught so to do by that Holy Spirit, which directed their Actions, appears from their constant Practice of Ordaining Ministers, as the Necessities of the Church requir'd, and even of imparting this *Power of Ordination* to others, as there was Occasion for Planting new Churches in different Parts of the World: A Power which no other

• Joh. 4.
20.

other Christians assumed, but themselves and those, who receiv'd it from *them*; except it were conferr'd upon 'em by an *immediate* and *particular* Revelation from GOD. Of which we have no other Instances in Scripture than those of *St. Paul* and *St. Barnabas*. And even as to one of these Cases, which we find in the Beginning of the 13th Chapter of the *Acts*, it may, not improbably, be thought, that the *Prophets* there mention'd, who by *St. Paul*, in his Accounts of the Church-Officers in *those* Times, are constantly placed next to the Apostles, had, besides other extraordinary Spiritual Gifts, the Power of Ordination conferr'd on 'em: Which however need not to be insisted on, because in the Case mention'd 'tis plain they acted by an extraordinary and express Direction from the Holy Ghost. But still the ordinary Way of attaining this Power was by receiving it from the *Apostles*, or from *those* who were empower'd to confer it by *them*.

Acts 26.
16, 17, 18.
Gal. 1. 1.
Acts 13. 1,
2, 3.

1 Cor. 12.
28.
Eph. 3. 5.
4. 11.

The Persons who might seem to have the fairest Title to it, were surely these Seventy Disciples, who were sent by Christ himself to preach the Gospel, and were endow'd with a Power of Working Miracles in Confirmation of their Mission; but yet we no where find, that any of 'em did take this Power upon 'em, unless they were afterwards invested with it by the *Apostles*. And of this Number, there is great reason to think, was *St. Matthias*, who was chosen into the Apostolical College in the Place of *Judas*. That this was the general Opinion of the Christian Church in the first Ages, appears from *Eusebius*: And 'tis in it self highly probable, that the Apostles in this Choice, would prefer to all others, those of the Disciples who had been dignified with a former Commission to preach

Hist. Eccl.
Lib. 1. cap.
12. & Lib.
2. cap. 1.

the Gospel by Christ himself: And if so, we have a plain Evidence of a distinct Power lodg'd in the Apostles, which other Ministers of the Christian Church, though even sent by our Lord himself to preach the Gospel, were not invested with.

*V. Ignatii
Epist. ad
Magnet. ad
Trallianos
& alius.*

Now that this Power of Ordaining Bishops and Presbyters, with whatever else of the Apostolical Authority, which was not *extraordinary* and *peculiar* to those Times, but of *continual* Use in all Ages for the regular Government of the Christian Church, was, in many Places *before*, and in all *after* the Decease of the Apostles, delegated to such Persons, to whom the Name of Bishops, as distinct from Presbyters, was appropriated, at least, within a *very few* Years after the Death of St. *John*; and that Bishops were look'd upon in the Primitive Times, as Successors to the Apostles in the *Ordinary* Part of their Spiritual Power, seems very evident from the most ancient Remains we have of Ecclesiastical History, and from what Writers are yet left of the first Ages of the Church.

There are therefore *different* Degrees of Regard due from Christians to the Ministers of Christ, *proportionably* to the different Stations in which they are plac'd in his Church: But there is some regard due to all, who act by an Authority *originally* deriv'd from him. *He that heareth you, heareth me*, though applicable in a *higher* Degree to those of a *superior* Order, and more *extensive* Authority in his Church, yet, we see, was spoken by our Lord to the Seventy Disciples; and may, in a good measure, be applied to *all*, who by his Authority preach that Doctrine which he and his Apostles did; who endeavour to reconcile Men to GOD, and to direct 'em into the Way to Pardon and Salvation,

tion by those very Means, which he himself has expressly appointed for these great and happy Ends.

Thus far have I consider'd the Words before us, as asserting the Authority of the Christian Ministry, who acting by a Power deriv'd to 'em from *Christ*, do so far represent *him* and execute *his* Orders, in a *due* Exercise of their Commission, that what is here said by our Lord may, in a good measure, be reasonably applied to them. *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.*

II. I proceed now to consider these Words, as intimating to us one of the most usual Causes of the ill Usage a Christian Ministry may meet with from Men: 'Tis often from a Disregard to Christ himself, a Disbelief of, or an Aversion to that Holy Religion, in which he came to instruct Mankind: *He that despiseth you, despiseth, or disregardeth, me.* 'Tis indeed hardly to be imagin'd, that a Person, who has a *real* Esteem for the Master, and a due Sense of his Authority and Power, should abuse or despise his Servants, who act by his Commission; it may much more reasonably be thought that he will, at least, preserve some Respect for their *Character*, even where perhaps none is due to their *Persons*.

For we may well distinguish between that Contempt which is cast upon the *personal* Miscarriages of the Ministers of Christ, and that which is cast upon their Office. And it does not always follow, that he who has little or no Esteem for some of his Ministers, does therefore disregard Christ himself. Thus, with respect to our Doctrine and Principles, if we preach Notions of our own for Doctrines of Christ, without any Authority

thority from Scripture ; or if we pretend to Powers of *another* Nature from what he ever gave to the Ministers of his Kingdom ; in these Cases, the giving no Credit to a Person, who plainly acts *beyond* or *against* his Commission, may very well be consistent with a great Deference to the Authority of his Master. Thus again with respect to our *personal* Misbehaviour in the Exercise of our Ministry, whether by a gross Neglect of the Duties incumbent on us, or a Temper of Mind, or Course of Life very unsuitable to our Holy Profession, and the express Precepts of our Religion, He who despises only those, who by their Vices or notorious Negligence in their Employment *will* make themselves despicable, cannot, meerly upon *this* Account, be said to despise or reject Christ.

Every Man indeed in reason *ought*, and every Good Man *will*, make such charitable Allowances to our Natural Defects, our Human Infirmities and Indiscretions, as all Christians are oblig'd to make to each other ; and will consider, that if our Employment in the Service of Christ lays upon us *great* Obligations, yet 'tis attended too in many Cases with *great* Difficulties : And that *just* Mixture of *Zeal*, and *Charity*, and *Prudence*, which is but requisite for our discharging it well and wisely, *seems* to imply something of a *natural* Happiness of *Temper*, which does not fall to every one's share, but certainly *does* imply such Measures of *Experience* and *Knowledge*, as well as *Grace*, as 'tis not to be expected should be found every where. Now, whatever our Obligations are, *we* still are but *Men*, subject to the same Passions and Infirmities with the rest of Mankind : And there is no reason that we alone should be excluded from a Share in that *mutual* Charity towards
each

each other's Indiscretions and *pityable* Failings, which is an exprefs Duty of our Religion, and is but necessary for the preserving Peace and Friendship, and for the common Happiness of Men. A Good Man will further find himself much more inclin'd to *grieve* upon those Occasions, where he finds, he cannot *excuse*, than to insult over such Miscarriages, and make them the common Subjects of his Conversation: Much less will he easily give credit to, or spread such ill Surmises and Reports of us, as are given out by our Enemies, without any manner of Proof; or impute to the whole Body the *personal* Miscarriages of a few. These Proceedings are contrary to all Rules of common Justice, and there is no Person who suffers in this manner, but would think himself highly wrong'd by it.

Lastly, A Christian will think himself oblig'd to pay that due Regard to the *Office*, which the *Person* invested with it has, it may be, no Title to: But still no Man can be oblig'd to have a *real inward* Esteem for such Ministers of Christ as do in no manner deserve it; because, indeed 'tis not possible that he should. 'Tis a thing out of the *Power* of a meer Office or Character to give; and will be found only to attend Piety and Vertue, and a *constant* Endeavour of behaving one's self, upon all Occasions, *suitably* to the *Profession* he makes, and to the *Character* he bears. 'Tis this alone reaches the *Heart*, and governs the *inward* Sentiments of Men; without it, all *outward* Expressions of Respect, however necessary for the preserving Peace and a due Order in the World, are meer Shew and Mechanism.

But tho' a Disregard, or perhaps an Aversion to this or that Minister of Christ, must not be thought to proceed

ceed *always* from a Disregard to Christ himself or his Religion, yet it *very often* does; and to this alone, I doubt not, is owing the greatest Part of that Contempt and Reproach, and unhandsome Usage, which, in a loose Age, is usually bestow'd upon the Christian Ministry, when by the good Providence of GOD it is secur'd from all other Effects of the Hatred of Men. There are those who hate the Ministers of Christ, *as such*. There are others, who hate those of 'em, at least, who endeavour to discharge faithfully that Trust which our Lord has reposed in in 'em; and *both* these may reasonably be suppos'd to have an Aversion for the Ministers of Christ, chiefly at least, because they reject or disregard our Lord himself.

1. As First, for Instance, Those, who are *really* Enemies to the Christian Faith it self, whatever other Dress they chuse to appear in, will find themselves much inclin'd, and in a manner, oblig'd, to lessen and vilifie the Christian Ministry, because they disown and reject the Author of it. *If*, as our Saviour speaks of their Predecessors, *they have called the Master of the House Beelzebub, they will bestow the same Title upon those of his household*, particularly upon such of his Servants whom they must look upon as the Instruments of a Spiritual Tyranny over the Consciences of Men, founded either upon Fable or Imposture. When Men are once turn'd Apostates from that Holy Faith in which they were instructed, and have attain'd to such a Degree of Impiety, as to *tread under foot the Son of God, and to account the Blood of the Covenant an unholy thing*, and have long done *despight to the Spirit of Grace*, as the Apostle to the Hebrews expresses this sad State, what can

Matt. 10.
25.

Heb. 10.
29

can the Ministers of Christ expect from these Persons, but all those Effects of their Contempt and Hatred, which they are not restrain'd from by the Civil Government. The same great Conceit of their own Judgments, and that Ambition to distinguish themselves by something *singular*, which usually engages Men to oppose the common and establish'd Opinions of those, among whom they live, will also *strongly* incline 'em to *despise* those, who, they find have not *Sense* enough to approve their Notions, and to *bate* those who have the *Insolence* to *contradict* 'em. Besides they *well* know, that the bringing the Christian Ministry into Contempt, by whatever odious Representations they can make of 'em to the People, will most effectually promote their Design of Propagating Infidelity, and *delivering* Mankind from the *Bonds* of the Christian Faith; which great Design, in short, ends in *this*, The depriving the World of the strongest and most *engaging* Motives to *every* Vertue, that were ever known to Men, and the banishing out of it those *Great* and *Chearing* Hopes, without which 'tis hardly worth the while to live.

2. Another Instance of Men, whose Aversion to the Ministers of Christ proceeds from their Dislike of the Government of Christ himself, may frequently be found among those who live in the habitual Practice of any known Sin. These Persons, though they are in the direct *Way* to it, yet perhaps have not hitherto proceeded so *far* in Impiety as positively to disbelieve the Gospel: But yet their Continuance in a Course of wilful Sin, implies, at least, a great Disregard to Christ: 'Tis a withdrawing themselves, as far as in them lies, from his Government, and is, in effect, a Saying,

C We

We will not have this Man reign over us : And this their Disregard to *him*, and continual Violation of the express Laws of his Kingdom, is naturally apt to produce in 'em a secret Aversion, at least, to those, whose *Business* it is, not to let 'em be easie in their Sins, and who faithfully lay before 'em the wretched Folly and Danger of those Vices, of whatsoever kind, which these Men are resolv'd *never* to part with, or, at least cannot bear the Thoughts of parting with 'em *at present* upon *any* account. If a Person of this Character enters our Churches, he can hardly fail of meeting with some Truths of Religion which expose and condemn his own Sentiments or Practice : And if he does not, yet he well knows what Opinion all serious Christians have of him : He is sensible that they see the Consequences, and, though they may pity, yet that they cannot but *condemn* the extream Folly of the Course he takes. Now it requires great Degrees of good Sense, for a Man not to hate those who, he knows, think ill of him, though never so justly. 'Tis therefore a loose and corrupt Ministry that such Persons are best pleas'd with ; not that they can have a real Esteem for one of such a Character, but because his Example makes them more easie to themselves, and, as they would fain think, furnishes 'em with a *sufficient* Excuse for their own Practice. On the other side, a Minister of a Regular and Useful Life, gives not only by his Discourses, but by his Example, a *perpetual* Occasion to severe Reflections on themselves : Which as they cannot well bear, and yet *will* continue to indulge themselves in a sinful Practice, 'tis but reasonable to expect, that, though perhaps they *cannot* wholly disesteem, yet they will *bate* such Ministers of Christ ; will, for the Ease of their
their

their own Minds be very glad to find out and expose any of their *real* Failings, or to fix upon 'em *imaginary* ones, and will endeavour to lessen their Reputation, and thereby the *Force* of their Doctrine and Example as much as they can.

Since therefore those employ'd by Christ in the Ministry of the Gospel may well expect to meet with such Usage from the World, it concerns us to prepare our selves for it, and by no means to be discourag'd from vindicating our Holy Faith and the just Authority of the Christian Ministry, or from a faithful Discharge of all other Duties of our Pastoral Care. 'Tis a noble Argument which our Lord makes use of, a little before his Passion, for the Consolation and Encouragement of his Apostles upon the like Occasions; and which may not only teach us Patience, but give us a sort of Satisfaction and Complacency under such an Usage. *If the world hate you, says he, ye know it hated me before it hated you.* Now surely 'tis enough for the Disciple to be as his Master, and the Servant as his Lord; and it can be no real Dishonour to any of us to find the same Treatment from Men as the *Great and Holy Jesus* did. The same Lot fell to his *Apostles*, as our Lord had foretold it would. St. Paul tells us, They were *reviled and defamed, were made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things*, the very Refuse of Mankind: Words which are thought to allude to the Custom in some Parts of *Greece* of picking up one of the vilest Wretches they could find, to make an Expiatory Sacrifice of, for the Purgation of their Cities and Appeasing the Anger of their Gods: And in this manner indeed were the Apostles *represented* and *used* as the worst and vilest of Men.

John 15.

1, 8.

Matt. 10.

25.

1 Cor. 4.

12, 13.

Περί-
κατα-

κατα-

κατα-

And in truth, *something* of this, though not always to such a *degree*, has been, *usually*, the Fate of the Best and Greatest Men that ever lived; of those of 'em especially, who in a corrupt Age, have employ'd themselves with Zeal and Diligence in correcting the Vices of Men; and this as well in the Heathen as in the Christian World. Thus it has always been, and thus we may expect it will always be, till the Body of Mankind becomes whiser and better than it has ever yet been. A corrupt World can seldom bear with Patience the Lustre of too bright an Example: And 'tis from this Opposition of the *Vices* and *Malignity* of Mankind to whatever is eminently Great and Good, that Persons of this Character, tho' not used by the World so severely as in the Instances mention'd, yet have *very* rarely attain'd so *great* and *universal* a Reputation in their own Times, as has been given 'em, by general Consent, in the following Ages. And this not always, because the latter Ages had a truer *Sense* of, or were more *inclined* to do *justice* to *Merit*, than the foregoing: But because the Virtues and Worthy Undertakings of Men long since dead, do neither excite the Envy, nor reproach the Vices and Follies of the World, in so sensible a manner, as those of the Living do. The dead Saints are out of our sight, and, as they give us no great Trouble, we can afford 'em a good Word, or perhaps pretend to pay a great Respect and Honour to their Memories, whom yet, if *we* had liv'd in *their* Times, we *should*, probably, have used in the same manner, as we *do* those, who endeavour to follow their Examples.

We have a remarkable Instance to this Purpose in the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, the Leading Men of the *Jewish* Nation, when our Saviour was upon Earth:
We

We are told, That in those Times they *built* and *adorn'd* the Tombs of the Prophets, who were generally ill used, and some of 'em murther'd by their Ancestors; and that *they said*, *If we had been in the days* Matt. 23. 29, 30. *of our Fathers, we would not have been Partakers with 'em in the Blood of the Prophets*: When yet these very Men *bated*, *reviled* and *crucified* a far greater Prophet, and one, who in Attestation of his Divine Mission, wrought *more* Miracles than all the Prophets together.

If therefore there will probably always be such a Party of Men in the World, as will endeavour to cast a Disesteem or Contempt upon a serious Piety and strict Vertue, and whatever Qualities best *deserve* the Regard and Esteem of Mankind, shall the Ministers of Christ be discourag'd from doing their Duty by so mean a Fear as this? Or can it reflect any real Discredit upon 'em, to suffer in the *same* Manner, and upon the *same* Account with the best Men that ever were in the World? Our Great Master himself exhorts his Disciples to be far *otherwise* affected upon these Occasions, when he tells us, *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the Prophets that were before you.* Matt. 5. 1, 12.

III. I proceed in the last place to consider the near Concern which our Blessed Lord takes in the Usage which his Ministers receive from the World: For these Words will easily, and agreeably to common Use, bear this Sense, That whatever Treatment *they* meet with, he looks upon as if done to *himself*: *He that beareth you, beareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.*

And

And if so, then certainly they who do reject or condemn the Ministers of Christ, *as such*, have great reason to dread his severe Resentment of their Behaviour. What he threatned to those, who rejected the Mission of these Seventy Disciples, to whom these Words were immediately spoken, is very terrible:

Luke 10. *I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day,*
12. *the Day in which the despised Jesus shall appear triumphantly as the Great Lord and Judge of all Men, for Sodom than for that City.* And with respect to other his Ministers, whose Mission is, though not immediately, yet originally, deriv'd from him, we cannot doubt either his Resentment, express'd in these Words, or his Power to punish whatever Contempts or ill Usage they meet with from *his* and *their* Enemies; but may be fully assur'd that he will in his own due time vindicate that Authority which he has bestow'd upon 'em for the Good of Mankind. Whoever they are that

Psal. 2. 2, *take counsel together against the Lord and against*
3, 4, 5. *his Christ, saying, Let us break their bonds asunder and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn, the Lord shall have them derision. Then shall he speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.*

The same may, in a good measure, be applied to those, who, though they do not positively disbelieve the Gospel, or renounce their Dependence upon Christ for Salvation, yet *will not* conform their Lives to the Laws of his Government; and who, as they shew thereby a Contempt of *his* Authority, so probably will have little regard for his Ministers, and will find themselves under strong Temptations to hate and misuse those, who seriously lay before 'em the Sin and Folly of

of

of the Ways they are engag'd in, and endeavour by all *Christian* and *Prudent* Methods to give 'em a true Sense of their Danger. We cannot but own that the harsh Usage of *any* Person who will kindly perform this most *generous* and *useful*, though (unhappily) *thankless* Part of *Friendship*, to us, is highly *disingenuous* and *unjust*: But when it is perform'd by *those* who are *expresly* authoriz'd by Christ so to do, such a Behaviour towards *them* is more unreasonable, and implies a still *further* Contempt of *him*; and is, in effect, a turning those very Means which *he* has appointed for the Conversion of Sinners and Reformation of the Vices of Men into a *further* Article of their Condemnation, when he shall come to judge the World.

Lastly, From this near Concern which our Lord here expresses for the Usage which his Ministers may meet with in the World, may well be inferr'd his kind Regard to what Services they can do to his Glory and the Salvation of Men, and that *their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*. A serious and constant Endeavour to rescue Men from Ignorance, Error and Vice, to instruct Sinners in the Means of Reconciliation with an offended GOD, to preserve 'em from *the wrath to come*, and to direct 'em into the Way to attain eternal Happiness, is an Employment so important and beneficial to Mankind, and so well-pleasing to GOD, that those who discharge it with Integrity and Care, with a *Christian* Zeal and a *Christian* Prudence (for of *each* of these Qualities there is *another* sort) shall not be *finaly* disappointed of their Reward; they shall, at least, receive it in a future State of Everlasting Rest and Joy, whatever Usage they may meet in this perishing World,
this

Acts 20.
24.

this short Scene of Tryal in order to an everlasting State of Being: Which therefore may well be born with a cheerful Patience upon so glorious a Prospect; as we find that Great *Apostle* did, who, recounting the Hardships he expected to meet with in the Course of his Ministry, speaks to the Elders of the Church at *Ephe-sus* in the following Words, with which I shall conclude this Discourse: *But none of these things move me, nei-ther count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my Course with joy, and the Ministry which I have received the Lord Jesus, to testifie the Gospel of the Grace of God.*

F I N I S.

